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Jean R. Brink, *The Early Spenser, 1554-80: 'Minde on honour fixed'*  
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*The Early Spenser, 1554-80: 'Minde on honour fixed'*, by Jean R. Brink. Manchester:  
Manchester University Press, 2019. xiv, 236 pp. ISBN 978-1-5261-4258-0. £80.00 hardback.

In what is arguably the most important contribution to Spenser studies since Andrew Hadfield's landmark biography Jean Brink has rendered a superb service to the field, filling in blanks in the poet's life and opening up fresh lines of inquiry for future scholars. Brink's account of the 1560s and 1570s is exemplary in its scholarly scrupulousness. A sustained analysis of Spenser's schooldays and undergraduate experiences, a meticulous reading of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, and a firm putting of Gabriel Harvey in his proper, if less witty and familiar place are just some of the highlights of this splendid monograph. It is a work that is sure to be of lasting impact. Brink is less interested in Spenser's access to Ireland prior to 1580 than some of her readers will be, but she opens a gateway into the poet's early encounter with that country that her counterparts have yet to fully explore.

Brink is upfront about the fact that her study shares with other biographical criticism a reliance on "circumstantial evidence, not facts":

In any biography, particularly of a figure about whom as little is known as Spenser, unproved assumptions are made that shape how evidence is presented. These assumptions derive from circumstantial evidence, not facts. This study is no exception, and it may be useful to make these hypotheses very clear. (5).

Brink is surely right in her assessment of the state of play with Spenser's biography: "Spenser's early life records have never been fully contextualized" (26). She uses expressions such as "It is probable" (110) and "we can tentatively assume" (111) as guardrails around her more speculative passages. Her distinctive contribution is to provide the elaborate context that is called for. Brink argues that Spenser was not a court aspirant, before going on to disconnect the poet's own progress from Harvey's more obvious ambitions and him in a complex network of reformers and innovators. A key feature of Brink's examination of Spenser's education and early life is her claim that he was all set for a church career and not a court career before his Irish service: "At some point between 1578 and 1579, Spenser exchanged the role of shepherd-priest for that of shepherd-poet" (4).

To a reader under lockdown due to COVID-19, Brink's book proved timely in ways that its author could not have envisaged. In a time before online teaching was possible, we learn of Spenser's experience of campus closure due to a pandemic:

The plague picked up force and ravaged Cambridge in the summer of 1574. In the Pembroke College account books, Spenser's name, like that of numerous others, appears in a list of those out of commons during the last six weeks of the academic year 1573-74. The accounts state that allowances for maintenance were given to seven Fellows and eight boys for the plague. This is the last reference to Spenser in the Pembroke College records. When plague caused the university to adjourn in the autumn of 1574, Spenser appears to have left Cambridge. No references of any kind to Spenser appear in the account books after the summer adjournment in 1574. (65-6)

Some sound advice on the plague had been issued by a London-based Dutch physician by the name of Jan van der Noot just five years earlier:

It is very good for the paciente that he do often chaunge his chamber, and that his windowes stand and open toward ye east, and north east, but the windowes which open toward ye south, shall euer be closed or locked, for the south winde hath in him two causes of corruption.

- i. Fyrst he debiliteth and weakeneth nature, as wel of whole people as of sicke.
- ii. Secondarely [...] the southwinde aggravate the hearing, hurteth the harte, for he openeth the sweating issues of mankind and so entreth into the harte. And therefore euery hole person shall in the time of pestilence, when the south wind doth blow, tary in the house the hole daie. And he nedes must goo forthe, yet shal he tary within so long til the sun be hie and longe risen or up.<sup>1</sup>

Writing this review while tarrying within I was able to reflect both on Spenser's isolation, despite being hard-wired into a network of patronage and politics, and on the solitary nature of scholarship no matter how many helping hands are involved.

In her introduction, Brink says modestly: "I view my work as complementary to Hadfield's because I have focused more narrowly on Spenser's early life in a study that, I hope, will raise almost as many questions as it answers" (2). *The Early Spenser* does raise many questions, and ones that needed asking. Like Hadfield, Brink uses literature as historical evidence. She also delves into cultural, political and religious debates of the 1560s and 1570s in order to open up new lines of enquiry.

I want to begin at the beginning, because Brink's opening gambit sets the scene for what follows. She begins with "three seminal examples of autobiographical allusions in Spenserian texts, only one of which has influenced Spenser's received biography" (2). How Brink handles these examples is crucial. The first is a notorious aside in the *View*, when, during a discussion of how the Gauls used to drink their enemies' blood and paint their faces with it, Irenius offers an anecdote one step removed from the topic in hand, about witnessing a beheading where a grief-stricken woman drank the blood of her adult fosterling:

And so have I seen some of the Irish do but not their enemies' but friends' blood, as namely at the execution of a notable traitor at Limerick called Murrough O'Brien, I saw an old woman which was his foster mother took up his head while he was quartered and sucked up all the blood running there out, saying that the earth was not worthy to drink it, and therewith also steeped her face and breast, and tore her hair, crying and shrieking out most terribly. (2)

This aside is replete with descriptive detail, the name of the executed providing a date and place: Limerick on 1 July 1577. The amount of information given in one sentence – 86 words in the *Variorum* edition cited by Brink – from the charge of treason against O'Brien to the words and actions and exclamations of his foster-mother makes it an unprecedented passage.<sup>2</sup> You couldn't make it up. Why would you?

Brink responds to this passage with astonishment: "If this autobiographical reference, occurring in a number of manuscripts, were to be confirmed, it would have a stunning impact on our understanding of Spenser's early life and might reshape the narrative leading Spenser to Ireland" (2). But what Brink does next is curious. She muddies the waters of this

rich vignette by speculating that Spenser might have been with Sidney in Ireland a year earlier – “It would then be logical to consider the possibility that Spenser accompanied Philip to Ireland when he visited his father in 1576” – before concluding that these two scenarios, the graphic eyewitness account of an actual event and her own unsupported conjecture that Spenser might have accompanied Philip Sidney on his earlier Irish sojourn, are equally credible: “Perhaps there is insufficient evidence to make a certain, or even a likely, case that Spenser was in Ireland in 1576, when Philip visited his father, or in 1577, when O’Brien was executed, but neither of these supposed visits is improbable” (3). The problem here is that this is not about two visits; it is about a detailed description of a verifiable judicial murder and an airy surmise. There is no equivalence. This is important because it signals a critical tendency within Brink’s book, which brings so much that is fresh and factual to Spenser’s early life, towards an overly cautious reading of the Irish material.

And this is only the first move. Brink’s next stratagem is to introduce her two other “seminal examples of autobiographical allusions.” Those of an Irish disposition will be disappointed to learn that the notorious description of the Munster Famine is not one of them: “Two other seemingly autobiographical allusions concern Spenser’s visits to the court and meetings with the Queen” (3). Brink cites line 101 of the *November* eclogue of the *Shepherd’s Calendar* in support of the claim that Spenser met Queen Elizabeth “prior to going to Ireland in 1579-80” (3). By now the vivid image of O’Brien’s foster mother’s distress at his decapitation is forgotten in favour of a possible allusion to an audience with her majesty: “We are told that Dido-Elissa, whom, following John Watkins, and others, I understand to figure as Queen Elizabeth, did not disdain Colin Clout” (3). I struggle to see how these two instances can be judged alike any more than the description of an execution placed alongside a surmise about a possible visit. Poetry as biography, or allegory as autobiography strike me as very different from prose recollections of events witnessed first-hand.

But Brink has not finished finishing with Murrough O’Brien. She offers her third example of an autobiographical allusion in the shape of another royal entertainment: “According to the received biography, Spenser was introduced to the Queen and court in 1590 by Sir Walter Raleigh and, on this occasion, Spenser read his work to the court. The evidence is found in the following lines from *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*”, and she then cites lines 358-62 (3) before summing up the “evidence”:

We cannot document that Spenser ever met Queen Elizabeth except for autobiographical passages in his poetry. Why is one autobiographical allusion treated as fact and the other ignored? One explanation may be that it has become an accepted tenet in Spenserian criticism that Spenser and Sidney never met. It seems consistent, as well as reasonable, to keep both autobiographical allusions, one from the *November* eclogue and the other from *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, in mind when we try to place Spenser in 1579-80 and in 1589-90. (3-4)

What happened to O’Brien and his foster mother? An elaborate anecdote dwelling on a death scene is supplanted by a piece of sheer speculation about Philip Sidney and two fleeting mentions in the poetry of meetings with the monarch. I have dwelt on this scene-setting introduction because it touches on a paradox at the heart of this wonderful study: despite unearthing evidence of an early interest in Ireland and producing evidence of the investment in Ireland of Spenser’s Cambridge contemporaries, and despite doubting his courtliness, Brink displays a disinterest in Ireland when it matters most and a preoccupation with court

politics when it is least in keeping with her overall thesis that the only real alternative to a colonial career for Spenser was not courtly but clerical.

Brink knows Spenser criticism inside out as her astute comments about earlier biographers like Grosart and Judson show, but she sometimes imputes faults to their findings that apply to her own labours: “Both Judson and Grosart dwell on narrative fictions in Spenser’s poetry and interpret these fictions as historical fact” (12). Isn’t this precisely what Brink does in accepting at face value Spenser’s claims to have had the ear of Elizabeth I? When Brink observes that “Judson assumes that Spenser’s verse is autobiographical” (16) the reproof could be directed at her own practice. To be fair her puncturing of pomposity is refreshing, as when she dismisses Judson’s “fanciful picture [of] the youthful Spenser as a character in one of Wordsworth’s poems even though the tone of the *December* eclogue of the *Shepherdess Calender* is unreservedly mournful and bleak” (16). Brink is certainly more sensitive to tone than her sometimes cloth-eared biographer predecessors.

Brink is on firmer ground with her insistence on the need to recognise lacunae in the life: “By underscoring this blank space and other such blank spaces, it is hoped that this biography will be suggestive for future scholarship and prompt the discovery of an entry that will solve the mystery of Spenser’s birth and parentage” (13). Brink’s book is exemplary in its scholarship but also vigilant in its scepticism, opening doors to future investigation rather than closing off debate or providing neat solutions to persistent puzzles. Time and again she tackles a precarious fact with a firm hand: “Elizabethan kinship claims [...] need to be carefully contextualized” (13). Careful contextualizing is crucial to Brink’s handling of the 1570s, but there were times when I felt that the *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland* is a substantial resource that deserves another, deeper look from Spenserians. New editions have emerged in the last decade that offer better access to this material.<sup>3</sup>

One of several delicate distinctions Brink makes is to examine the idea of “honour” and honorifics, titles and claims to nobility. This social mapping of Spenser’s environment is deftly handled, and adds nuance missing from earlier accounts: “As Spenser and his readers were aware, the Spencers of Althorp were not a ‘house of auncient fame’; they were wealthy sheep farmers, who belonged to the gentry, not the nobility” (14). Brink does a lot of myth-busting, as when she corrects the idea that Spenser being designated a “poor scholar” implies an impoverished background: “Edwin Sandys was admitted to Merchant Taylors’ School on 23 March 1571 when his father was Bishop of London. Poor does not mean poor when an Elizabethan bishop’s son is given a scholarship!” (23). But this attempt to drill down into the layers of Elizabethan class system doesn’t always convince: “There is no reason to salvage either an aristocratic or a middle-class Spenser. Some puzzles, such as Spenser’s precise lineage, are best left unresolved until we are sure that we have sufficient evidence to draw satisfactory conclusions” (18).

There is a lot of layering between aristocratic and middle-class that is seldom acknowledged in Spenser studies, and Brink is to be commended for correction common misconceptions: “Spenser’s poverty, like his kinship with the wealthy Spencers of Althorp, has been overstated while his academic prowess has been underestimated” (26). But I felt after a few pages that the comments on class were becoming less convincing: “Like many of those who were not well-born, Edmund Spenser was attracted to and repelled by the mystique of gentle blood” (32). What mystique? I don’t think we should be mystifying money or property where a future member of the planter community is concerned. An unwillingness to home in on the economic reasons for Spenser going to Ireland mean that Brink is reduced to familiar phrases

and generalisations: “Although we lack the documentary evidence to draw any reliable conclusions about Spenser’s parentage and social status, we know from his work that lineage and rank were matters of concern to him, as indeed they were to his contemporaries” (33).

If her comments on Spenser and social class lack depth, the opposite is true of Brink’s analyses of education and religion which are textured and informed by thorough engagement with contemporary sources. Chapters 2 and 3, on Merchant Taylors’ School (31-48) and Pembroke College 49-69) are models of scrupulous scholarship. Brink brings a number of new insights to the table. She examines original sources afresh, including the “Nowell Account Book”: “My examination may be the first since Grosart had it in his possession” (29, n23). What Brink supplies is an “independent assessment of the records” (53). She is especially astute on Cambridge politics – from religious controversy to competition for coveted positions: “The story of Harvey’s conflicts with his Cambridge colleagues is important to Spenser’s biography because it makes us aware of Harvey as a figure in his own right and introduces us to his somewhat quirky personality” (60). Brink’s in-depth analysis of how Spenser’s experience of church and state in the 1570s underpinned his decision to leave England sees her at her scholarly best, enriching our understanding by delving into documents and debates and details that others have neglected or dealt with only fleetingly: “Spenser’s decision to accompany Lord Grey to Ireland should be informed by a full understanding of the politics of this religious context” (74).

Eighty years ago Raymond Jenkins published an essay entitled “Spenser: The Uncertain Years 1584-1589”.<sup>4</sup> Brink shifts the locus of uncertainty back to an earlier half-decade in her 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, “‘Southerne shepherdes boy’ (1574-79)”, in which she painstakingly explores the period leading up to the publication of the *Shepherdes Calender* (70-87). This chapter title is deceptive as this is also the place where Brink begins to conduct a superb re-reading of the *Shepherdes Calender*, firmly rooted in a rich understanding of its topicality, and what she later refers to as its “polyvalence” (142). Brink begins by acknowledging the scale of the problem: “We have virtually no documentary evidence regarding Spenser’s whereabouts from summer 1574, when he is last mentioned in the Pembroke College Account Books, until 1578” (70).

To plug this gap, Brink calls for further research on John Young (c.1532-1605), Master of Pembroke (1567-78) and thereafter Bishop of Rochester, a key figure in Spenser’s transition from Cambridge to Ireland who provided the poet with employment at a crucial juncture (71). Young is certainly a figure who would repay deeper study. In his only published sermon, preached on 2 March 1576, he castigated pride in a speech which was put into print precisely because, by his own admission, “not well taken in part of some of the hearers, where it was spoken: it is therefore thought expedient that the Preacher thereof, should cause it to be put openly in print, and so to refer it, to bee expended by the learned & others of ripe Iudgement”.<sup>5</sup> And one can see why Young’s sermon might have raised a few hackles:

The meaning of al which fables and parables (as I take it) is, that there is not so very a Jacke an Apes, *Tam magnus asinus*, so great a Dolt and Asse, so verye a Cowarde, or Peacocke, so improfitable a Bramble and member in the common wealth, but hee can thinke him selfe worthy of the hiest place, and seeke it too. It is commonly and truly sayde, that Jacke would be a gentlema[n], & no doubt so he would, and a noble man too, and a Prince if it might be. The historie of Jacke Cade, alias Jacke strawe, Watt tyler, Bob carter, Tom miller, that rable and route of rascals, proves this matter sufficiently. To be short, it is the fault of us al, of the hiest, of the lowest, of the

greatest, of the least, of the best, of the worst, to be hie harted and minded, a faulte which might be soone amended, if we would vouchsafe to have an eye unto the Prophet David our paterne here propounded unto us, who protesteth of himself, and no doubt in trueth and in veritie, that his heart was not exalted, he was not hie minded.<sup>6</sup>

This real-life “Roffy” was clearly a feisty figure and although Brink does not cite this sermon her discussion of the 1570s religious controversies of the 1570s is one of the highlights of her study. Yet despite her own excellent endeavours in reconstructing the religious context of the 1570s, Brink concludes: “Unfortunately, we as yet know very little about clerical politics or about Spenser’s relationship with Young” (161). I think if Spenserians were to undertake a reading of Young’s 1576 sermon, his only published work, they might be surprised by its contents and what it tells us about the poet’s employer as a literary force.

A major strand of Brink’s study is her treatment of Spenser’s various mentors and patrons, and chapter 5, “Gabriel Harvey and Immerito (1569-78)”, is where her scholarship really comes into its own. Her claim that the absence of an accessible edition of Harvey’s works has contributed to the blurring of lines between Spenser and his supposed mentor is convincingly made (88). She makes an excellent case for the need for a modern edition of that writer’s work to supersede Grosart’s 3-volume edition of 1884-5. One of the paradoxes of Brink’s study is that she has to make Harvey visible – vividly so – in order to demote him from mentor to manipulator, from “foolish *Hobbinol*” to the “buffoon” and “hanger-on” of Nashe’s piercing portrait, “who dropped the names of Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney to enhance his own importance” (213). Indeed, Brink argues that Harvey and Spenser moved in separate circles and “belonged to distinctly different patronage groups” (94). Spenser advanced by merit; Harvey became an object of ridicule.

Brink’s aim here is to establish that Harvey was not acting in a supporting supervisory role but as a fellow student with his own agenda: “One of the principal contributions of this study of the early Spenser is that I distinguish Edmund Spenser from Gabriel Harvey” (5). Harvey emerges in Brink’s narrative as a careerist and a rather clownish figure, a much more minor and dependent individual and a far less impressive writer than has hitherto been the case. And yet paradoxically Brink gives greater attention to Harvey’s life and works than many other Spenser biographers. Indeed she makes the case for a new perspective on Harvey as a manipulative self-fashioner worthy of closer scrutiny. She presents him “in his own right” (60), even if that puts him in the wrong. Essentially, Brink argues that Harvey – whom she rather quaintly characterises as “Spenser’s schoolmate at Cambridge” (40) – invented his role as elder and better in order to advance his own career. I found Brink’s discussion of Harvey persuasive and even deliciously mischievous. Harvey comes to represent a certain pedantic type and could perhaps stand in for a few modern Spenserians.

The book here both points out clear connections through patronage and opens the door for further investigation. Speaking of Harvey’s *Gratulationes Valdinenses* (1578) Brink notes the significance of its author’s pitch for patronage: “Harvey’s tribute to Sidney precedes in print Spenser’s dedication of the *Shepherd’s Calendar* to Sidney and has been blandly passed over as one of the first of many celebrations of Sidney as the ideal courtier” (103). One figure intimately associated with Leicester and the Sidneys who is overlooked by Brink is Edmund Campion, who served under Sir Henry Sidney in Ireland, dedicated his *History of Ireland* (1571) to the earl of Leicester, and was a friend of Philip Sidney. How this Catholic martyr fits with the radical Protestant grouping of the 1570s is a mystery explained by Irish politics

of the period, specifically by the outbreak of the Desmond rebellion in 1579 and the demise of the Leicester-Sidney interest in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Spenser and Campion would appear in print together in Sir James Ware's *Two Histories of Ireland* in 1633, but given their shared patrons and the Harvey-Smith and Leicester-Sidney matrixes might they have known each other in the 1570s? There are gaps and silences in Brink's otherwise rich contextualising of the 1570s that would shed light on Spenser's life and the circles he moved in. Brink neglects to mention that the period of Harvey's hankering after Philip Sidney's approval was also the period when Sidney composed his "Discourse of Irish Affairs" in 1577 (103-4).<sup>8</sup>

Another figure of relevance here is John Derricke, who dedicated *The Image of Irelande* to Philip Sidney, dated from Dublin on 16 June 1578.<sup>9</sup> When Brink suggests that Philip Sidney shaped the career of Fulke Greville (110) she fails to mention that Greville "was appointed captain of one of three ships sent to protect the Irish coast" in 1580.<sup>10</sup> The more one becomes aware of the extent to which Elizabethan writers and translators were blooded in Ireland the harder it is to understand how this has been overlooked. If Brink does a great job of fleshing out the 1570s, and she does, then she also opens the door to a different kind of study, less Anglocentric, that would focus on the Irish milieu in which his patrons and mentors were stepped and join the dots between the two worlds. That harrowing beheading in Limerick is evidence of Ireland's early impact.

Chapter 6 was for me the least impressive section. Its subtitle – "Spenser, Sidney, and the early modern chivalric code" – left me cold. I don't do chivalry, and neither did Spenser or Sidney, in my view. I see chivalry as a mere gloss over gore, something the English harped on about while butchering others, and sometimes themselves. But Brink persists with this line: "The early modern chivalric code consisted of a set of unwritten cultural conventions and convictions, which idealized military service, elevating service on the battlefield over jockeying for position at court" (122). Not much of a code if it can be cracked that easily.

The theme of chivalry brings us back to the Sidney network. We are told that "[t]here is [...] anecdotal evidence that Sidney became Spenser's patron" (113), but the note on this is very vague given its potential significance (130, n9). And this is a recurrent feature of this study, that some questions are interrogated with vigour while others are all too quickly cast aside. When Brink does allude to Ireland it is in a disconnected way. For example: "An overlooked but important contact that Spenser would have made in 1579 is Sir Henry Sidney" (114). If Spenser witnessed the execution of Murrough O'Brien then he would have been in Ireland at the same time as Sir Henry. According to Brink, "Sir Henry served as a paradigm of honour for the next generation, of course for his sons, but also for Fulke Greville, Lodowick Bryskett, and very likely Edmund Spenser" (115). Strange to see such a robust contribution to Spenser studies stoop to puffery. As I have argued elsewhere, Sir Henry lacks the "charisma" that Brink imputes to him (114).<sup>11</sup>

Yet Brink is astute in recognising that Sidney must have had an impact on Spenser. She introduces that idea of influence in an unexpected way, however, through psychologising and speculation:

Ireland was unquestionably a painful subject for Henry Sidney. It must have been devastating for him to be present at Privy Council meetings. Certainly, his accounts of bloodthirsty police actions in his *Memoirs* were intended to counter rumours that he had been far too soft in administering the Queen's justice. At the same time, Sidney's obligatory focus on Ireland in 1579 would have prompted him to reminisce about his



experiences there. It is likely that Philip Sidney and perhaps Edmund Spenser heard at first hand from Henry himself the stories about his adventures and service which were later recorded in his *Memoirs*. (115)

Philip Sidney and Spenser had also witnessed Ireland at first hand. Brink follows up this point with some excellent detail on the protracted negotiations Sir Henry was engaged in between March and October 1579 around Ireland and a possible return to service there with Philip (116). But before long we are back with Henry's hagiography:

Spenser, like Philip's friends, would have admired Sir Henry Sidney, whom Fulke Greville describes as "a man of excellent natural wit, large heart, sweet conversation and such a governor as sought not to make an end of the state in himself, but to plant his own ends in the prosperity of his country". This credit to Sir Henry's selflessness in privileging country over personal prosperity shows how much Greville admired Sir Henry. (117)

This sycophantic snapshot is no less ludicrous than Harvey's hilarious grovelling which Brink rightly ridicules.

This see-sawing between debunking conventional criticism and echoing its most banal findings is a recurrent feature of *The Early Spenser*. Having challenged the received view that Spenser aspired to a career at court Brink backtracks and buys into the idea of a coterie of court humanists: "Among attempts to describe the ethos of the generation of men who, like Spenser, Sidney, Greville, and others, came of age in the late 1570s and early 1580s, we find F. J. Levy's description of their intellectual milieu as 'court humanism', a 'peculiarly English' version of Italian civic humanism" (120). Brink finds "chivalry" in the strangest of places:

From Henry Sidney's memoirs of his service in Ireland, we get a vivid picture of the early modern chivalric code in practice. Even though these memoirs were written when Sidney, disappointed about his prospects of regaining Elizabeth's favour, was despondent about his health and finances, he still portrays Ireland as a medieval land of adventure where feats of chivalry and tests of the honour code are likely to occur. (123)

Speaking of the hunting down of Rory Oge O'More (c.1540-1578), Brink remarks that "Sir Henry Sidney's description [...] reads like a passage out of Malory's *Knights of King Arthur*" (123). Here Brink misses a trick because Malory's text already has an Irish dimension: "This storehouse of romance offers in the episode of Launceor, 'the Irysshe knyght,' and his lady Colombe a chivalric plot which would easily lend itself to dramatization".<sup>12</sup> Perhaps "Launceor, an 'orgulous' prince of Ireland", was the model for Sir Henry?<sup>13</sup> Ireland was a source of inspiration as well as a place of reflection.<sup>14</sup> Art imitates life imitates art. It is difficult to reconcile Sidney's conduct with chivalry and honour, but Brink does her best: "Sir Henry Sidney expected his readers to regard his wholesale slaughter in MacMahon's country, as not merely appropriate but also commendable" (124). She credits the Sidneys with introducing Spenser "the protégé of Elizabethan churchmen, to the early modern chivalric code, a system of values and conduct that suited his *Faerie Queene*" (129). The orgy of beheading in Sir Henry's *Memoir* confirms him as the head of the Elizabethan chapter of Isis and sets the scene for the dramatic depictions of decapitation in Spenser's epic poem. If you have witnessed at least one and heard tell of many then writing the beheading comes more

readily.<sup>15</sup> Yet Brink insists on seeing Spenser, despite winning preferment in Ireland, as never fully buying into the violent colonial culture he inhabited: “If Spenser ever came to understand the politics of empire, it never so fully engaged his imagination as did bowers of bliss” (129). On the contrary, Spenser’s Irish experiences explain his resistance to bowers of bliss.

Consider one famous Elizabethan court match connected to the Sidneys. In the *March* eclogue Brink rehearses the claim that “Lettice” – in line 20, “And learne with Lettice to wexe light” – may be a play on Lettice Knollys (1543-1634), the widow of the first earl of Essex, whose late husband, Walter Devereux (1539-1576), had died in Dublin on 22 September 1576, reportedly from dysentery, and who subsequently married Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, on 21 September 1578.<sup>16</sup> Brink notes the latticework of links around this name before concluding that “this topical information seems too much ballast for the reference to ‘Lettice’” (81). What Brink fails to mention is the fact that these events were bound up with Ireland, where rumours persisted that Walter Devereux had been detained there through Leicester’s machinations.<sup>17</sup> Lettice’s father, Sir Francis Knollys, furnishes a further Irish link, since “in 1566 he was sent to Ireland for a two-month stint to advise Sir Henry Sidney, the lord deputy, on the O’Neill problem in Ulster”.<sup>18</sup> A direct link between the Sidneys and Essex is established in Sir Henry’s *Memoir* in the shape of unexpected news in the midst of Philip’s 1576 visit to Galway: “Here heard we first of the extreme and hopeless sickness of the Earl of Essex, by whom Sir Philip being often most lovingly and earnestly wished and written for, he with all the speed he could make went to him, but found him dead before his coming, in the castle at Dublin”.<sup>19</sup>

In chapter 7, Brink marshals her evidence adroitly to reveal the cult of Elizabeth as an invention of critics and not of Spenser: “Spenser’s *Aprill* is not an early version of the cult of Elizabeth, but a brilliant critique of that cult written just as it was beginning to develop” (140). Brink subsequently adds nuance to this point, noting that the spectre of Mariolatry hangs over Elizabeth’s emerging iconography: “The *Shepheardes Calender* may have been instrumental in introducing the cult of Elizabeth, but it may also be the only example of a text in which this cult is treated ironically” (146). Brink’s reading of *Aprill*, like most of her commentary on the *Shepheardes Calender*, is as radical as it is refreshing, and constantly alert to multiple interpretations, although in a poem where Pan doubles as Henry VIII, as well as Christ, Brink should perhaps have mentioned that King Henry was the younger brother of Arthur (1486-1502), whose death paved the way for Henry’s reign.<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth’s Uncle Arthur, named in the wake of Malory’s *Morte Darthur* (1485), deserves closer attention. Richard McCabe remarked of Spenser: “Elizabeth I is related to Arthur solely through a poetic device that serves as the expression of a political ideal. The queen’s Arthurian descent is an *evident* fiction”.<sup>21</sup> In fact Elizabeth has grounds more relative than fiction, namely her uncle Arthur, her father’s older brother.

In chapter 8, “Puzzling identities: From E. K. to Roffy’s ‘boye’ to Rosalind” (153-169) and chapter 9, “*Familiar Letters* (1580)” (170-197), Brink is back to her bristling best, chasing down Harvey’s contribution to Spenser’s carefully staged appearance in print. Paradoxically, the more Harvey emerges as a collaborator the more he looks like the junior partner, the lesser talent, the truly clownish young man, and the writing buddy angling after a patron. Indeed, in calling Harvey a “collaborator” Brink seems to imply subordinate status, or at least that as the most blatant place-seeker in this partnership Harvey was in the driver’s seat. Hobbins was the one eager to hobnob: “This kind of self-promotion would conflict with Spenser’s persona as *Immerito*” (154).

In her chapter on the *Familiar Letters* Brink does not draw back from large claims: “Spenserian editors have been reluctant to acknowledge that, in every substantive respect, Harvey is the principal author of *Familiar Letters*” (171). Brink does not hesitate to apportion blame: “Including ‘Well-Willers’ Preface’, Harvey’s total word count is 16,844 or 83 per cent; excluding the Preface, Harvey’s word count is 16,299 or 80 per cent. Spenser’s letters serve largely as the frame and justification for Gabriel Harvey’s rhetorical display” (171). I worried that her parcelling out of the published – and performed – correspondence between the two was an object lesson in how not to write about collaboration. Then again, Shakespeare studies shows that we do not yet have a working theory of co-authorship for the early modern period, when it was the norm, precisely because the self-obsession of critics will not permit them to see beyond the individual author to the practice of collaboration. By the time Brink mentions Harvey’s use of a figure called “Benvolio” in his *Letter-Book* the unfortunate traveller from Saffron Walden already resembles another vain fop, Shakespeare’s Malvolio (176). Even so, Brink acknowledges that her apportioning of individual authorship to the *Familiar Letters* is good guesswork in the absence of an original manuscript: “Unfortunately, stylistic evidence can never be conclusive; only the recovery of holograph evidence would be decisive” (179).

Brink is prepared to believe the poetry before the prose, so that having relegated the Murrough O’Brien vignette early on, she can claim that Spenser did make an earlier visit to Ireland before Lord Grey’s arrival there. Ironically, the historian Nicholas Canny cites an allusion to the River Shannon in *FQ*.IV.iii.27 as evidence of a journey made by Spenser in the company of Fulke Greville, while Brink the literary critic opts for a historian’s rationale:

My rationale for supporting an early trip to Ireland on Spenser’s part involves the large sum that Grey paid Spenser after his arrival in 1580 and a lease. We know that some time in the spring of 1580 Spenser went to Ireland on Grey’s business because during this visit he found time to locate a property in New Abbey that he wanted to lease for his family. (185)

This rationale is faulty. Brink’s claim that “Spenser preceded Grey to Ireland” is based on a puzzling reference to Spenser securing the lease of New Abbey in County Kildare in the summer of 1580, puzzling because this lease was granted on 24 August 1582, not 1580 (87). Brink cites *The Eleventh Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland* (Dublin: HMSO, 1879), 174, but I checked that source and could not see the citation. The following passage in Hadfield’s biography may hold the key, as his phrase about Grey leaving clearly refers to his leaving Ireland for the last time and not his leaving England in 1580: “In the same month that Grey left we have a record of Spenser acquiring yet more property. On 24 August he was granted a twenty-one-year lease of the former friary, New Abbey, in Kilcullen, County Kildare”.<sup>22</sup> Hadfield’s reference to *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor sovereigns during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth I*, 4 vols (Dublin: Burke, 1994), ii, 549 (3969) does check out.

Brink frequently opens a door into Elizabethan Ireland only to close it all too quickly or fail to see what lies behind it, as when she conducts a marvellous discussion of Harvey’s run-in with Sir James Croft (c.1518-1590) over an oblique allusion in *Familiar Letters* (192-3). Brink neglects to mention Croft’s Irish experiences, which dated back to 1551-2 when he served a brief spell as Lord Deputy with two tasks that proved too difficult, the pacification of Ulster and the imposition of the Edwardian Reformation.<sup>23</sup> Croft remained a player in terms of the

development of Elizabethan policy on Ireland and was the subject of a treatise by his kinsman and Spenser's fellow Munster planter Sir William Herbert (c.1553-1593).<sup>24</sup>

It is no surprise that final chapter in Brink's biographical study is the shortest, both because it brings us to the threshold of the Spenser's second life in Ireland from 1580 onwards, and because Brink is far less interested in Ireland than she is in England, in spite of her insights and the potential for a less Anglocentric view of the early years. Yet the title of this short chapter – "Ireland and the preferment of Edmund Spenser (1580)" – sums up her willingness to see Ireland as offering an opportunity for advancement rather than being merely a sign of domestic disappointment. It is one of the paradoxes of Brink's persistent refusal to pursue the Irish dimension that she actually transforms our understanding of Spenser's supposed exile: "There remains an unfortunate sense that no one would have willingly chosen Ireland over Elizabethan London and the Elizabethan court" (204). By reconceiving Spenser's Irish service as a preferment rather than a punishment Brink invites us to look again at what Ireland meant, not just to the landless younger sons of the lesser gentry or to unemployed graduates eager to pursue their various professions in a place where they could innovate and experiment, but to the clerical and political classes who saw in that neighbouring country an opportunity to test their faith and their leadership.

The standard of accuracy throughout is exemplary, but there are some errors. For example, Harvey's MA degree being led by Thomas Neville, "a descendant of Barnabe Googe" (61). Neville (c.1548-1615) was not a descendant but a close contemporary of Googe (1540-1594), and incidentally the latter's absence from a study of Spenser's early years aside from this brief mention seems odd. Googe is a writer with some affinities with Spenser. Both were Cambridge-educated, involved with radical Protestantism, wrote eclogues, and served in Ireland. Elsewhere, Thomas Campion is confused with Edmund Campion (203), and Walter Devereux appears as "William Devereux" (81), and listed as such in the index (232).

There are many other Irish connections touched on all too briefly or passed over who merit attention. Walter Haddon, who took part in a debate about colonizing Ireland at which Sir Thomas Smith and Gabriel Harvey were present, is discussed briefly by Brink (199-200), but he remains a neglected and potentially important figure for understanding the intellectual and literary circles Spenser may have had access to in the early 1570s.<sup>25</sup> Walter Devereux would be a useful figure in exploring early Spenser. Richard Davies (1501-1581), Bishop of St David's, preached a sermon at the funeral of Essex in Carmarthen on 26 November 1576.<sup>26</sup> The dedicatory epistle to Sir Walter's son Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, is by Edward Waterhouse (1535-1591), in whose arms Walter had died. Waterhouse's longstanding patron was Henry Sidney whom he had served both at court and later as secretary in Ireland from 1565 when Sidney was appointed Lord Deputy. Another figure of note, Francis Drake, is mentioned by Brink as a lure for Philip Sidney to go to the "New World" (122). Drake is a figure heavily invested in Essex's efforts to settle Ulster and while his involvement in the Massacre at Rathlin – more brutal than the killing of the garrison at Smerwick – remains to be written.<sup>27</sup> One recent account provides a remarkable parallel with Spenser's description of the execution of Murrough O'Brien:

In 1575 Sorley Boy MacDonnell was in rebellion against the Dublin government. When the earl of Essex moved against him, MacDonnell sent his clan's women and children to the island of Rathlin, just off the coast and safe, he thought, from his enemies. Essex, however, had the use of Francis Drake's small squadron which conveyed John Norris [...] and his troops over the strait. After dealing with the small

garrison there, the Crown forces systematically killed the women and children who had taken refuge in the caves around the island. Perhaps Drake's men, sailors being notoriously ill disciplined, aided the flushing out and dispatching. It was said that Sorley Boy, watching this massacre from the mainland, which included his own family, literally tore the hair from his head in his powerlessness and grief.<sup>28</sup>

Sorley Boy, like O'Brien's foster mother, offers an enduring image of the emotional impact of colonial violence. Certainly a greater understanding of events in Ireland in the 1570s would shed light on Spenser's experiences.<sup>29</sup>

Brink suggests that Spenser may have seen in the treatment of Thomas Cartwright a reason not to pursue an academic career and perhaps also a reason to view Ireland as an alternative career path (55). Cartwright served as chaplain to Adam Loftus, archbishop of Armagh. According to Cartwright's biographer, "In spite of the war in the north against Shane O'Neill (in the course of which Loftus's cathedral was burnt to the ground), Ireland was a more friendly environment for a puritan than England".<sup>30</sup> This is borne out by Brink's research. Speaking of Cartwright's Irish vocation Brink observes: "The earlier account of events at Cambridge has implications for religious toleration in Ireland [...] Cartwright was not an isolated example of the relocation of English intellectuals to Ireland to evade prosecution in England" (202). Ireland afforded respite to reformers and innovators. It was a home for displaced radicals, who, as is the way of things, became colonial reactionaries who displaced the native Irish. Brink perhaps pushes this line too far: "It is a matter of record that the Dublin of Edmund Spenser was more tolerant of dissidents [...] than was London, where both the left and the right were persecuted" (203). The terms "left" and "right" don't fit the framework here and the English pale may have had its own intolerance and paranoia but this is a matter for historians of the reformation in Ireland.<sup>31</sup>

Brink's treatment of the Irish material seems surprising after the assiduousness of her pursuit of documents: "By the machinations of the English government or by accident, or both, land became available in Elizabethan Ireland" (201). Brink begins by listing Spenser among a group of writers who "might well have met each other in sixteenth-century London" (1). Dublin was another meeting place for Elizabethan authors.<sup>32</sup> In keeping with her theme of showing Harvey up by bringing him out of the shadows, Brink suggests that he was the driver for Spenser going to Ireland, as the poet "would have heard from Harvey about efforts to colonize south Antrim and east Down" (198). This is a reference to Lisa Jardine's work on Harvey's marginalia which uncovered the debate in 1571/2 between Humphrey Gilbert, Walter Haddon, John Wood and the Smiths – Sir Thomas and his son.<sup>33</sup>

Other opportunities for Irish topical allusions are lost. The reference to Sir Thomas Smith in the Gloss to line 10 of the *Januarie* eclogue is an open invitation to revisit Harvey's involvement in the debate around Ireland in the early 1570s, linking it to Spenser's recent visit there and his imminent departure once again. Instead, Brink sees it only as evidence of Harvey's efforts at self-aggrandisement, since the Smith namecheck "is irrelevant to the themes in the eclogues of the *Shepheardes Calender*" (154-5).<sup>34</sup> Brink attributes to Harvey "the scholarly pretensions of the Gloss" (159). The poetic wit and invention are all Spenser's. Another example of how steeped in Irish politics and culture Spenser's contemporaries were can be gauged by the fact that Thomas Drant (c.1540-1578) dedicated his 1567 translation of Horace's *Epistula ad Pisones* to Thomas Butler, tenth earl of Ormond and third earl of Ossory (1531-1614).<sup>35</sup> In *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters* (1580) Spenser mentions to Harvey "the Rules and Precepts of Arte [...] that M. Philip Sidney gaue me, being the very

same which M. Drant deuised, but enlarged with M. Sidneys own iudgement, and augmented with my Obseruations”.<sup>36</sup> He later tells Harvey, “once, or twice, you make a breache in Maister Drants Rules”.<sup>37</sup>

George Turbervile is one contemporary well worth another look. He served as a captain in Ireland before August 1580, and was like Spenser a published poet and translator when he went there.<sup>38</sup> Turbervile wrote a Moscow epistle in 1569 entitled “To Spencer”.<sup>39</sup> This has been understandably dismissed as an allusion to Edmund Spenser who would only have been 15 years old at the time, and Thomas Spencer, with whom Turbervile had dealings appears a likelier candidate.<sup>40</sup> Andrew Hadfield sets out the evidence in his biography:

In a volume attached to his *Tragicall Tales* (London, 1587), *Epytaphes and Sonnettes annexed to the Tragical histories*, dated 1569, although published in 1587, Turbervile includes three verse epistles to friends written while he was in Moscow as secretary to Thomas Randolph, on a on a state visit to meet the Russian emperor, Ivan the Terrible (June 1568–Sept. 1569). One is addressed ‘To Spencer’ [...] and it is plausible that this could have been Edmund Spenser. The main objection is that Turbervile was about ten years older than Spenser and nothing else links the two at this point.<sup>41</sup>

What Hadfield says here is not strictly true. Ireland linked Spenser to Turbervile, since both were there in 1580 – and possibly earlier. One of Turbervile’s poems, “An Epitaph vpon the death of Henry Sydhnam, and Giles Bampfield Gentlemen”, is about two figures involved in the Irish expedition led by Walter Devereux that sailed from Liverpool on 19 July 1573.<sup>42</sup> “The L. of Essex chosen was” to deal with “cankred Kernes” and in the long campaign that followed Henry Sydenham and Giles Bampfield were drowned, an event we can date to January 1574.<sup>43</sup> A second poem in the same collection, imaginatively entitled “Another epitaph vpon the death of Henry Sydhnam, and Gyles Bampfield gent.” laments they “Were forst to lose their liues in Irish flood”.<sup>44</sup> In his epistle “To Parker”, Turbervile makes an intriguing comparison:

Wild Irish are as civil as  
the Russies in their kind;  
Hard choice which is the best of both,  
each bloodie, rude, and blind.  
If thou be wise, as wise thou art,  
and wilt be rulde by me:  
Live still at home and covet not,  
those barbarous coasts to see.<sup>45</sup>

Hadfield’s scepticism about the Turbervile epistle contrasts with the credence he gives to an earlier document suggesting that Spenser was in France in 1569 serving the French ambassador Sir Henry Norris (c.1525-1601).<sup>46</sup> Norris’s six sons included four who died serving in Ireland – William in 1579, John in 1597, and Henry and Thomas in 1599. Maximilian died in Brittany in 1593, and Edward, serving in Ostend in 1599, was brought home after his mother, Margery, wrote to the queen and “asked for her last son back”.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Hadfield, Brink doesn’t like to acknowledge the potential early influence of travel abroad: “Recent accounts have favoured filling in these ‘lost’ years with service in Ireland or France, but we have no evidence connecting any of these Mr Spencers with Edmund Spenser” (84, n7). The allusion to France seems out of place here because accounts

of Spenser's service in France locate it in 1569, where there is a document to back it up. Here is how Mark Eccles set out the evidence:

"Edmonde Spenser that broughthe *letteres* to the Quenes *Maiestie* from Sir Henrye Norrys" at Tours received ten marks paid by the Treasurer of the Chamber on October 18, 1569, at Windsor, "over and besydes ix<sup>li</sup> prested to hym by Sir Henry Norrys". Grosart regarded it as "quite impossible" that Spenser could have been the messenger. Carpenter mentioned the arguments against the identification – that Spenser was then young, and a student at Cambridge – but observed: "Sp[enser] later was frequently a bearer of dispatches. Note Sp[enser]'s knowledge of French in 1569 (translations in the *Theatre of Worldlings*) and his contact later with others of the Norris family." I should like to add that Raleigh, who was no older than Spenser, was serving with the Huguenots in France in October, 1569; yet about 1572 he is listed as a student at Oxford. Marlowe was only one of many Elizabethan students who interrupted their residence at a university to perform occasional services for the government. One cannot be sure that the poet was the messenger, but he seems more likely to have been than any of the other recorded Edmund Spensers.<sup>48</sup>

Is there enough to suggest that the Edmund Spenser serving Henry Norris may have known the poet George Turbervile serving Thomas Randolph? Was a fifteen-year old published poet really a boy? Ages are tricky to judge in the period. When in a letter to Sidney dated 19 August 1570, Queen Elizabeth refused the Lord Deputy's request that his fifteen-year old son join him in Ireland she cited plague rather than precocity:

Where we perceve that you have commanded that your eldest sonne Philipp shuld now cum over thither to youe into Irland we fynd him thereto willing but considering the universalite of sickness partly by agues, partly by plague dispersid in the countrees betwixt this and the passage in to Irland, we think it not safe for him and therefore we have taken uppon us lycence you to cum hither to us before wynter except ther be great cause to the contrary.<sup>49</sup>

If the translator of *A Theatre for Worldlings* was the Edmund Spenser serving Norris in France might he not have known another young poet and translator serving in Russia? Did Spenser know Turbervile in the 1560s?

The antiquarian and mapmaker Laurence Nowell, cousin of Alexander and his brother Robert (d.1569), was in Ireland in the early 1560s and his 1564 map of Ireland is a crucial instance of colonial cartography.<sup>50</sup> Ireland appears in a different context. A payment from Robert Nowell's bequest dated 20 February 1574 and marked "Too the marriage of the Daughter of wyddowe Irelande" gets glossed by Grosart thus: "The Irelands of Lancashire were amongst the Nowells' humbler kinsfolk".<sup>51</sup> These kinsfolk included the widow Ellen Ireland, and William, James and Christopher Ireland. Grosart's study of the Nowell payments throws up several intriguing links:

In the long roll of recipients of the gifts of money and cloth bestowed by Dean Nowell, as trustee of his brother's bounty, upon Robert Nowell's "poore kynsfolkes" in Lancashire, in the months of June and July 1569, were these: -

To Lyttis Nowell wieffe to Lawrance Spensere of Castell p[ar]ishe ij yeardes di.  
Lynen & in moneye ... ijs.

To her sonne Ellis Spensere of the same p[ar]ishe ij yeardes wollen  
Letis Nowell ... one yearde di. wollen. (pp. 308-9, 334-5.)

It is to be noted that in the first entry the wife of Lawrence Spenser is mentioned by her maiden name to show that she was a Nowell.<sup>52</sup>

Is it possible that Lettice Nowell, wife of Lawrence Spenser, is the “lettice” of the *March* eclogue and not Lettice Knollys? There is a latticework of links here that has yet to be unpicked, and indeed a longstanding invitation to pick them issued by Grosart:

Lettice Nowell, mentioned *infra* as wife of Lawrence Spenser of Castle Parish, who had a son Ellis Spenser, may have been daughter of this Roger Nowell. Here we have a link of connexion between Nowells and Spensers which might on special research assist to interesting facts bearing upon the origin of Edmund Spenser the poet.<sup>53</sup>

There are other Nowells on the prowl in the period. Henry Nowell was involved in an expedition to Norembega (New England) in 1578 with a group of adventurers with strong links to Ireland including George Carew, William Carey, Edward Denny (1547-1600), Humphrey Gilbert, Francis Knollys, Henry North and Walter Raleigh.<sup>54</sup> We know for sure that Henry Nowell was in Ireland in 1592.<sup>55</sup> Captain George Nowell was serving under Sir William Russell in Ireland in 1595.<sup>56</sup> Thomas Churchyard (1523?-1604) who served in Ireland under Henry Sidney in 1575-6 was a recipient of the Nowell bequest on 13 October 1580.<sup>57</sup>

Brink does not dig into the Careys as deeply as she might have done. We are told that Elizabeth Carey (1552-1618), daughter of John Spencer of Althorp, “the only female dedicatee to the Faerie Queene other than the Countess of Pembroke”, like her sisters “married above her station” (15) when she wed her first husband George Carey, because Carey was “Elizabeth’s kinsman” (his father Henry was the Queen’s cousin). When George Carey married Elizabeth Spencer on 29 December 1574, 22 years before he became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Hunsdon in 1596, his younger brothers were in Ireland. John Carey (d.1617), 3rd son of Henry Carey (1526-1596), 1st Lord Hunsdon, was in Ireland with his brother William (d.1593) serving under Walter Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Essex in 1574.<sup>58</sup> Neither the *ODNB* nor the History of Parliament entries on John (he served 3 times as MP for Buckingham, 1585, 1589, 1593) mentions Ireland. The Careys Irish connection went all the way back to Henry’s grandfather Thomas Boleyn (1476/7-1539), who served as earl of Ormond from 8 December 1529 to 1538.

Brink’s book, condensed and clotted in ways that suggest constant revision and an incremental layering of evidence over a long period, is also a settling of accounts, because she has had her doubters in the past. I was embarrassed twice reading this embarrassment of riches. Once, when the acknowledgements referred to the ribbing Brink received for suggesting Spenser did not write the *View* (ix). I devoted a whole chapter of *Salvaging Spenser* to her “Brinkmanship”. The second was when she referred to an essay by my late supervisor Lisa Jardine and added “ably assisted by Willy Maley” (199). I believe that Jean may have suspected that Lisa’s generous footnote to me in that essay concealed a larger debt. I can confirm that it did not. All the primary sources, archival work and insights were Lisa’s own. Like Lisa, Brink goes for the ore and her assiduous scholarship shines through in this study. We speak nowadays of “research monographs” when we really mean simply book-



length arguments. *The Early Spenser* really is a research monograph. It reads like a volume that was pieced together over decades rather than years and for that reason it is certain to be a work of enduring criticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan van der Noot, *The gouerance and preservation of them that feare the plague. Set forth by John Vandernote, phisicion and surgion, admitted by the kynge his highenesse. Now newly set forth at the request of William Barnard of London Draper* (London: William How, for Abraham Veale, 1569), Avr-Avi. This namesake of the poet had been in London for some time. See Ben Parsons and Bas Jongenelen, ‘Jan Van der Noot: A Mistaken Attribution in the Short-Title Catalogue?’, *Notes And Queries* 53, 4 (2006): 427.

<sup>2</sup> Ireland is full of shadows and echoes. An earlier lord deputy of Ireland, Lord Leonard Grey, appointed on 23 February 1536, was at odds with an earlier incarnation of Murrough O’Brien. See Mary Ann Lyons, “Grey, Leonard [known as Lord Leonard Grey], Viscount Graney (c. 1490–1541), lord deputy of Ireland”, *ODNB*; Christopher Maginn, “O’Brien, Murrough, first earl of Thomond (d. 1551)”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 4 May 2020. The cause of death of this earlier O’Brien is unrecorded, but his counterpart, Lord Leonard Grey, met the same fate as Spenser’s O’Brien, being beheaded at Tower Hill on 28 June 1541.

<sup>3</sup> See Mary O’Dowd (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Tudor Period, 1571-1575* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2000); Bernadette Cunningham (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Tudor Period, 1566-67* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2009), and Bernadette Cunningham (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Tudor Period, 1568-71* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Jenkins, “Spenser: The Uncertain Years 1584-1589”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 53, 2 (1938): 350-362.

<sup>5</sup> John Young, *A sermon preached before the Queenes Maiestie, the second of March. An. 1575* (London: Rycharde Watkins, [1576?]), Sig. A1v.

<sup>6</sup> Young, *A sermon preached before the Queenes Maiestie*, Sig. B1r-B1v.

<sup>7</sup> On Campion, see Michael A. R. Graves, “Campion, Edmund [St Edmund Campion] (1540-1581), Jesuit and martyr”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 7 May 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Sidney “Discourse of Irish Affairs”, in Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (eds.), *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 3-12.

<sup>9</sup> John Derricke, *The Image of Irelande* (London: John Day, 1581).

<sup>10</sup> John Gouws, “Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554-1628), courtier and author”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 8 May 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Willy Maley, “‘The name of the country I have forgotten’: Remembering and Dismembering in Sir Henry Sidney’s Irish Memoir (1583)”, in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton (eds.), *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540-1660* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 52-73.

<sup>12</sup> W. F. McNeir, “A Possible Source for The Irish Knight”, *Modern Language Notes* 58, 5 (1943): 383-385, at 384.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert L. Kelly, “Malory’s ‘Tale of Balin’ Reconsidered”, *Speculum* 54, 1 (1979): 85-99, at 93.

<sup>14</sup> See John Hennig, “Ireland’s Place in the Chivalresque Literature of Mediaeval Germany”, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 53 (1950): 279-298.

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- <sup>15</sup> Patricia Palmer, “‘An Headlesse Ladie’ and ‘a Horses Loade of Heades’: Writing the Beheading”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, 1 (2007): 25-57.
- <sup>16</sup> Simon Adams, ‘Dudley [née Knollys; other married name Devereux], Lettice, countess of Essex and countess of Leicester (1543-1634), noblewoman’, *ODNB*. Retrieved 7 May 2020.
- <sup>17</sup> J. J. N. McGurk, “Devereux, Walter, first earl of Essex (1539-1576), nobleman and adventurer”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 7 May 2020. See also Ted Hickey, “An Elizabethan Portrait”, *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1990/1991): 53-56.
- <sup>18</sup> Wallace T. MacCaffrey, “Knollys, Sir Francis (1511/12-1596), politician”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 7 May 2020.
- <sup>19</sup> Ciaran Brady (ed.), *A Viceroy’s Vindication?: Sir Henry Sidney’s Memoir of Service in Ireland, 1556-1578* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 90.
- <sup>20</sup> See Rosemary Horrox, “Arthur, prince of Wales (1486-1502)”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 9 May 2020.
- <sup>21</sup> Richard McCabe, “Spenser and Holinshed”, in Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s “Chronicles”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 543-558, at 546; emphasis in original.
- <sup>22</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 185, 484 n213.
- <sup>23</sup> See Stephen G. Ellis, “Croft, Sir James (c.1518-1590), lord deputy of Ireland and conspirator”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 10 May 2020.
- <sup>24</sup> Arthur Keaveney and John Madden (eds.), *Sir William Herbert: Croftus, sive de Hibernia Liber* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1992).
- <sup>25</sup> See Gerald Bray, ‘Haddon, Walter (1514/15-1571), civil lawyer’, *ODNB*; Charles J. Lees (ed.), *The Poetry of Walter Haddon* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967).
- <sup>26</sup> Richard Davies, *A funerall sermon preached the xxvi. day of Nouember in the yeare of our Lord M.D.LXXVI* (London: Henry Denham, 1577).
- <sup>27</sup> According to his biographer, “Drake’s own role in the massacre is unclear”. See Harry Kelsey, “Drake, Sir Francis (1540-1596), pirate, sea captain, and explorer”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 18 May 2020.
- <sup>28</sup> Michael Morrogh, “Warfare on Elizabethan Ireland”, *History Review* 62 (2008): 33-35, at 34.
- <sup>29</sup> For an account of a massacre that occurred between Rathlin and Smerwick see Vincent P. Carey, “John Derricke’s *Image of Irelande*, Sir Henry Sidney, and the Massacre at Mullaghmast, 1578”, *Irish Historical Studies* 31, 123 (1999): 305-327.
- <sup>30</sup> Patrick Collinson, “Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603), theologian and religious controversialist”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 6 May 2020.
- <sup>31</sup> See for example James Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation in Ireland: Clerical Resistance and Political Conflict in the Diocese of Dublin, 1534-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- <sup>32</sup> The project that Pat Palmer heads up at Maynooth, based on collaborative research with David Baker and myself, will help identify the key players in the extensive Irish network in which Spenser was to some extent hub and spokesperson. See MACMORRIS (Mapping Actors and Contexts: Modelling Research in Renaissance Ireland in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century) <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/arts-and-humanities-institute/hosted-research-projects/macmorris>.
- <sup>33</sup> See Lisa Jardine, “Encountering Ireland: Gabriel Harvey, Edmund Spenser, and English Colonial Ventures”, in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60-75.

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- <sup>34</sup> I have argued otherwise. See Willy Maley, “‘Who knows not Colin Clout?’: *The Shepherdes Calender* as Colonial Text”, in *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture and Identity* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 11-33.
- <sup>35</sup> Thomas Drant, *Horace his arte of poetrie, pistles, and satyrs Englished and to the Earle of Ormounte* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1567).
- <sup>36</sup> Edmund Spenser, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters: lately passed betweene two vniuersitie men: touching the earthquake in Aprill last, and our English refourmed versifying With the preface of a wellwiller to them both* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1580), 6-7.
- <sup>37</sup> Spenser, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters*, 55.
- <sup>38</sup> See Raphael Lyne, “Turbervile [Turberville], George (b. 1543/4, d. in or after 1597), poet and translator”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 7 May 2020. Turbervile’s first works appeared 4 years after his friend Barnabe Googe’s *Eglogs, Epytaphes, and Sonettes* (1563). See George Turbervile, *Epitaphes, epigrams, songs and sonets with a discourse of the friendly affections of Tymetes to Pyndara his ladie* (London: Henry Denham, 1567).
- <sup>39</sup> George Turbervile, *Tragicall tales translated by Turberuile in time of his troubles out of sundrie Italians, with the argument and lenuoye to eche tale* (London: Abell Jeffs, 1587), 186-90.
- <sup>40</sup> See Hyder E. Rollins, in “New Facts about George Turbervile”, *Modern Philology* 15, 9 (1918): 513-38, at 533-35.
- <sup>41</sup> Hadfield, *Spenser: A Life*, 467, n34.
- <sup>42</sup> Turbervile, *Tragicall Tales*, 169-71.
- <sup>43</sup> Turbervile, *Tragicall Tales*, 169; John Erskine Hankins (ed.), *The Life and Works of George Turbervile*, Humanistic Studies No. 25 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Publications, 1940), 70.
- <sup>44</sup> Turbervile, *Tragicall Tales*, 176-77, at 177.
- <sup>45</sup> Turbervile, *Tragicall Tales*, 189-193, at 193.
- <sup>46</sup> Hadfield, *Spenser: A Life*, 66-7.
- <sup>47</sup> See D. J. B. Trim, “Norris, Sir Edward (c. 1550–1603), soldier and administrator”, *ODNB*. Retrieved 11 May 2020.
- <sup>48</sup> Mark Eccles, “Elizabethan Edmund Spensers”, *Modern Language Quarterly* 5, 4 (1944): 413-427, at 415. There were other Spensers in Ireland in the 1560s and 1570s. Andrew Hadfield mentions that Thomas Spenser, archdeacon of Chichester, was recommended by Edmund Grindal as a potential archbishop of Armagh on 19 November 1567. See Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, 114.
- <sup>49</sup> Tomás Ó Laidhin (ed.), *Sidney State Papers 1565-70* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1962), 137.
- <sup>50</sup> Add MS 62540, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_62540](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_62540), 27 February 2020. See J. H. Andrews, ‘Colonial Cartography in a European Setting: The Case of Tudor Ireland’, in David Woodward (ed.), *The History of Cartography, Volume 3: Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), pp. 1670-1683, at 1675. See also Peter Barber, ‘A Tudor Mystery: Laurence Nowell’s Map of England and Ireland’, *Map Collector* 22 (1983): 16-21. Confusion around two – or possibly three – Laurence Nowells persisted until recently, leading one commentator to ‘assign the grand old Scottish verdict of “not proven”’. The debate is well-summarised by Raymond J. S. Grant in Laurence Nowell, *William Lambarde, and the Laws of the Anglo-Saxons* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 11-16, at 16.
- <sup>51</sup> A. B. Grosart, *The Townley MSS: The Spending of the Money of Robert Nowell of Reade Hall, Lancashire of Reade Hall, Lancashire; Brother of Dean Alexander Norwell, 1568-1580* (Manchester: privately printed, 1877), 51, n6.

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<sup>52</sup> A. B. Grosart (ed.), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser*, 10 vols., I (Privately printed, 1882-4), xxvi. Two different John Spensers who were students at Oxford and Cambridge respectively were recipients of the Nowell bequest on 7 November 1575 and 29 April 1578. Grosart (ed.), *Complete Works*, xxxv.

<sup>53</sup> Grosart, *The Townley MSS*, 309, n5.

<sup>54</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London: Henry Denham, 1587), p. 1369.

<sup>55</sup> Alan J. Fletcher, *Drama and the Performing Arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland: Sources and Documents from the Earliest Times until c.1642* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 282.

<sup>56</sup> David Edwards (ed.), *Campaign Journals of the Elizabethan Irish Wars* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2014), 225.

<sup>57</sup> Merrill Harvey Goldwyn, "Notes on the Biography of Thomas Churchyard", *The Review of English Studies* 17, 65 (1966): 1-15, at 3. Goldwyn points out that Churchyard had dedicated one of his many works to Alexander Nowell on 8 April that same year. See Thomas Churchyard, *A warning for the wise, a feare to the fond, a bridle to the lewde, and a glasse to the good. Written of the late Earthquake chanced in London and other places, the. 6. of April 1580. for the glorie of God, and benefite of men that warely can walke, and wisely can iudge* (London: Iohn Alde and Nicholas Lyng, 8 April 1580). Curiously, at the end of Churchyard's text, after the final verses and "FINIS", the name "Richard Tarlton" appears in print. Tarlton (d.1588) was an Elizabethan clown and balladeer who mocked Gabriel Harvey, making this whole earthquake business appear rather odd. Brink points out that Harvey's Letter-Book envisages Spenser playing "Tarletons parte" (180).

<sup>58</sup> See Arthur Collins, *The peerage of England; containing a genealogical and historical account of all the peers of England* (London: R. Gosling and T. Wotton, and W. Innys and R. Manby, 1735), III, 177. William Carey was one of Essex's "gentlemen servants". I owe this last point to David Edwards.